

PREFACE

Jefferson County Officials Weed Board, and Staff Directory

Jefferson County Board of Commissioners:

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Jefferson County Weed District Board:

*Cory Fitzgerald, Chairperson
Bill Gillespie, Vice Chair
Jeff Pallister
Dave Kirsch*

*Whitehall
Whitehall
Boulder
Commissioner*

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Jill Allen

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Jefferson County Weed Board Staff:

*Stephanie Blasenak
Educational Outreach Coordinator*

*P.O. Box H
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Note: Approximately 1-2 additional staff is needed for seasonal/temporary positions to aid in management of noxious weeds on County right-of-ways, MDOT right-of-ways, and the BLM weed program.

Jefferson County Weed District operates under the guidelines set within the Montana/County Weed Control Act & Administrative Rules, and Jefferson County policy.

*The Jefferson County Weed Board offices are located at:
111 Odyssey Lane, Boulder Montana & 3 Whitetail Rd., Whitehall Montana*

INTRODUCTION:

Jefferson County Weed District Organization:

The Jefferson County Weed District was organized under specification of the Montana Codes Annotated, Sections 7-22-2101 through 7-22-2153. Jefferson County has a three (3) member Weed Board that was created under MCA 7-22-2103. The Jefferson County Board of Commissioners appoints the Weed Board members and the length of their terms. As stated in MCA 7-22-2109 the Weed Board is responsible for the planning, implementing, and administrating the County Weed Management Plan. This is done through a Weed Coordinator that is recommended by the Weed Board and approved by the Board of County Commissioners to organize, direct and supervise the activities needed to carry out the County's weed management program as designated by Montana. All costs of the Weed District is to be paid out of a noxious weed fund authorized by MCA Section 7-22-214.

Jefferson County Weed Management Plan Purpose:

The purpose of the Jefferson County Weed Management Plan, in conjunction with the Montana State Weed Management Plan, is to strengthen, support and coordinate private, county, state and federal weed management efforts in Jefferson County and Montana, to promote implementation of ecologically based integrated weed management programs within Jefferson County.

Noxious weeds are established and spreading in Montana and in Jefferson County. The Jefferson County Weed Board has created this plan for the purpose of managing noxious weeds in Jefferson County, with emphasis on specific weed management areas, as outlined in the attached (EIA), Appendix C. Noxious weeds render land unfit for agricultural production, recreation, wildlife habitat; increase erosion, sedimentation of streams and alter the bio-diversity of the ecological systems. These invasive plants are designated noxious by rule of the Montana Department of Agriculture and local county Weed Boards based on their detrimental impact to the environment and economy of Montana.

*The Jefferson County Weed Management Plan will outline objectives that are reasonable for effective and efficient invasive noxious weed management for all landowning entities in Jefferson County. These objectives will provide guidelines for private, county, state and federal land managers to develop plans and goals consistent with state and national strategies; provide a method of prioritizing management strategies, and allocating the limited resources based upon these priorities; and prioritizes **Noxious Weed Trust Fund Grants** based on compatibility and compliance with the Montana State Weed Management Plan. This plan is dynamic and will be revisited every two years as ruled by the Montana Department of Agriculture for qualification of potential funding through the Noxious Weed Trust Fund.*

Overview of Jefferson County:

Jefferson County is located in the southwestern Montana. The county slogan is the “Undiscovered In Between” and provides an accurate description of our magnificent landscape. The County encompasses 1,659 square miles or 1,062,038 acres and is bordered by Broadwater, Silver Bow, Madison, Lewis & Clark, Deer Lodge, Powell and Gallatin Counties.

There are four (4) Federal Highways in Jefferson County including; US 12, US 287, Interstate 90 and Interstate 15. The State Highways in Jefferson County include; MT 2, MT 41, MT 55, and MT 69. There are an estimated 4,254.7 acres or 358 line miles that comprise Montana Department of Transportation Right-of-Way. There is approximately 794 miles of designated county roads.

The main line of Montana Rail link railroad runs through the county with two spur lines extending from Whitehall to Twin Bridges and in the northeastern portion of Madison county from Sappington Junction to Harrison.

There are two incorporated towns in Jefferson County, including; Boulder & Whitehall. There are also several smaller towns including; Basin, Cardwell, Clancy, Jefferson City and Montana City. The County seat is Boulder. Jefferson County’s population is estimated at 11,406.

There are two (2) river systems located in Jefferson County: the Boulder River and the Jefferson River. Principal mountain ranges located in Jefferson County consist of the Bull Mountain Range, Elkhorn Mountain Range and the Continental Divide.

Approximately 37% of the total acres in Jefferson County is dedicated to agriculture or 391,248 acres. Jefferson County’s primary resource and economic base is production agriculture, wood products and mining. Tourism and recreation continue to be a growing economic base for Jefferson County.

Federal lands in Jefferson County comprise 52% of the total acreage or 556,268 acres; approximately 460,626 acres is under the management of the USDA Forest Service, approximately 92,381 acres are managed by the USDI Bureau of Land Management, approximately 1614 acres is managed by the US Fish & Wildlife Services, approximately 3155 acres is managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Services, approximately 1042 acres is managed by Montana Department of Corrections and State lands comprise 3% of the total lands or approximately 31,526.

Jefferson County is plentiful with wildlife management areas, state historical markers as well as numerous Fishing Access Sites and State Parks.

The remaining 466,987 acres are privately owned. This comprises the remaining 44% of total acres in Jefferson County.

Please refer to the Jefferson County EIA, Appendix C, for detailed information regarding topography, soils, water, climate, wildlife, fish, cultural resources, visual resources, and vegetation information. This EIA also includes a list of Threatened and Endangered Species that are located within Jefferson County.

JEFFERSON COUNTY INTEGRATED NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN

Jefferson County Noxious Weeds

Jefferson County's Noxious Weed list is comprised of species on the statewide list and two additional species listed specifically by the Jefferson County Weed Board. Noxious weeds are estimated to infest 10 to 12 percent of the total acreage in Jefferson County.

Priority 2B: *These weeds comprise 10% of the total acreage within the County. These noxious weeds make up 90% of the infested acreage. The largest infestations include Spotted Knapweed, Leafy Spurge, Houndstongue, and Canada Thistle. Management priorities include maintaining clean roadsides, public grounds and areas, requiring landowners to manage and contain infestations to reduce the infestations, work with landowners to establish management programs, identify and work to eradicate small infestations, and provide cost share assistance.*

Priority 2A: *This group consists of eight weeds, of which only one (1) is known to infest acreage in Jefferson County. Hoary Alyssum is widespread throughout Jefferson County occurring mainly along right of ways. Other Priority 2A plants that have been identified in Jefferson County in small rare instances include: Perennial Pepperweed and Tansy Ragwort. Management priorities will include: Provide cost share assistance, maintain clean roadsides, public grounds and areas, require landowners to manage and contain infestation to reduce infestations, work with landowners to establish management programs, identify and work to eradicate all infestations.*

Priority 1B:. *With aquatic noxious weeds identified in the Missouri Headwaters a complete survey was conducted during the 2011 growing season. Eurasian Watermilfoil was identified infesting waters in the Jefferson River. The source of this infestation is found in the Jefferson Slough in Southern Jefferson County. Because of the infestation of this aquatic weed, an area task force has been formed to set priorities for these sites as well as pool educational resources for the benefit of landowners and recreationists. The newly Missouri Headwaters EWM Task Force spearheaded a week long hand pull effort in a 5 mile stretch of the Jefferson Slough in July 2012. Additional management strategies for the future are being planned by the task force.*

Priority 1A: *This category is limited to Yellow Starthistle. There have been no sightings of this plant to date, but it has been detected in surrounding counties.*

Jefferson County Declared Noxious Weeds: *At this time there is two (2) county declared noxious weed specified in Jefferson County. This noxious weed is Baby's Breath and Russian Olive tree. Management of these weeds are the same as Priority 2B Noxious Weeds.*

Jefferson County Watch List: *There are also two (2) additional weeds of concern within Jefferson County that are managed if resources permit. Weeds of concern include Common Mullein & Field Scabious.*

Jefferson County Weed Program Goals & Priorities

As stated earlier, the Jefferson County Weed Board operates under the guidance of the Montana County Weed Control Act, dated October 2011, Title 7, Chapter 22, Part 21, Sections 2101-2153. The Jefferson County Weed Board is charged with enforcement of the County Weed Control Act and bases the County Weed Program on the requirements of the Noxious Weed Control Act as well as the Montana State Noxious Weed Management Plan.

The Weed Board is directed to provide information, guidance and perform weed management activities within the county. The Jefferson County Weed Board provides assistance to private landowners in forming management plans to promote good stewardship for their land and to effectively and efficiently manage invasive noxious weeds. The Weed Board also provides assistance and develops cooperative agreements with State and Federal agencies to manage noxious weeds on their land within Jefferson County.

Among these cooperative agreements is an agreement to manage noxious weeds on Montana Department of Transportation rights-of-way. There are an estimated 4,254.7 acres that are managed each year on these rights-of-way. The average yearly funding for these acres is approximately \$37,000.00 for an average price of \$8.70 per managed acre.

As of 2012, plans are being made with USDA Bureau of Land Management as well as neighboring counties to enter into cooperative agreements starting in 2013.

Jefferson County also has cooperative agreements with Jefferson Watershed Council, Department of Natural Resources and Fish, Wildlife & Parks to assist with weed management responsibilities on designated waterway and tributaries to control the aquatic invasives.

Weed Management Areas

The Weed Board provides assistance to private landowners with formation of noxious weed management plans on their own lands and formation of cooperative weed management areas to address specific, localized noxious weed problems within a group of landowners in a specific area of concern. There are four identified Weed Management Areas in Jefferson County: North Boulder Valley II weed management area, Lower Boulder River Valley weed management, Travis Creek area and future Cedar Hills weed management area.

The Weed Board provides assistance to these groups via cooperative grants obtained from the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund and RAC. Jefferson County actively seeks funding to assist these groups with cost-share for herbicide and/or commercial herbicide application cost-share through these grants. There are also several watershed projects underway, including the Jefferson Canal and Pipestone Creek to assess and treat noxious weeds within the riparian corridor as well as address the sediment issues. These projects have received funding from the Department of Natural Resources.

In addition to seeking grant funding for cost-share, the Weed Board offers a countywide cost-share program to all landowners within Jefferson County. This is a 49% herbicide cost-share up to a maximum of \$1500 per landowner in one calendar year and not to exceed \$6000 in a four year period. This cost-share assists landowners that are not currently involved in a cooperative management grant project. See attached APPENDIX H for cost-share program specifics.

Noxious Weed Compliance Program

MCA 7-22-2116 Part 1 states: It is unlawful for any person to permit any noxious weed to propagate or go to seed on the person's land. A landowner is considered to be in compliance if they file a Weed Management Plan and the plan is approved by the Jefferson County Weed Board. In the case of a landowner is not considered to be in compliance the Weed Board has adopted the following procedures:

When an infestation of noxious weeds have been identified or reported, the Weed Board will attempt to notify the landowner/manager of the problem with a letter outlining the following information:

- ***Legal description where infestation occurs.***
- ***A common location associated with the site.***
- ***Noxious weeds known to be present.***

The landowner/manager will be asked to notify the Weed Board within ten (10) days of their intentions in addressing the noxious weeds. If the landowner/manager does not respond within the ten (10) days, a certified letter will be sent requesting voluntary compliance in the form of a noxious weed management plan. This plan will help to guide the landowner/manager in developing a comprehensive weed management program and help meet requirements set in 7-22-2123 (3) MCA, placing the landowner/manager in compliance. If the landowner/manager does not respond within the ten (10) days, the Weed Board or Weed Board Agent will seek a court order to enter and inspect the land to determine if noxious weeds are present on the property. Under MCA 7-22-2124 the Board may seek a court order to enter the property and institute appropriate noxious weed control measures or seek a civil penalty. If weed control measures are facilitated by the Weed Board, the cost of control costs and up to 25% will be charged to the landowner. If this amount is not paid within 30 days, the Weed Board will levy this amount to the property taxes as a special tax. The Jefferson County Weed Board will continue to work with all landowners to develop a Weed Management Plan.

Subdivision Weed Management Plans

As stated in the Jefferson County Weed Management Requirements for Subdivisions: "Upon approval by the Board, this plan must be signed by the Chairman of the Board or appointed Representative in cooperation with the agency responsible for the disturbance of ground and constitutes a binding agreement between the Board and such person or agency."

Jefferson County charges the sub-dividers for time spent on the review, inspections and approval process. The fees are as follows: \$150.00 fee for minor subdivisions (5 lots or less), and a \$150.00 fee for the first five lots of a major subdivision with an additional \$20.00 per lot over five.

Gravel Pit/Opencut Weed Management Plans

The Department of Environmental Quality requires all new gravel pits submit a noxious weed management plan before approval. The Jefferson County Weed Board is charged with the review, inspection, and approval process. A \$150.00 fee is charged.

Right of Way Waivers

When a landowner objects to weed control measures along a state or county highway or road that borders or bisects their property they will be asked to complete and submit Noxious Weed Control Permit/Plan (Appendix G) per 7-22-2153MCA. This permit/plan must be approved by the Weed Board. If control measures are not carried out as per permit/plan, the Weed Board will send a letter requesting alternative measures be carried out within 30 days or the agreement will be revoked and control measures will be undertaken by the Weed Board and may be fined as outlined in MCA 7-22-2153 Part 5 (a) & (b).

Education

Jefferson County Weed Board will continue to develop and participate in numerous educational programs County wide. The Weed Coordinator, the Educational Outreach Coordinator & the Madison/Jefferson Extension Service will offer Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) courses throughout the year. In addition to trainings the County will continue to work with many of the Jefferson River Watershed group within the County as well as other organizations like the Elkhorn Working Group and Weed Committee to inform landowners and recreationist to the impacts of invasive noxious weeds. Jefferson County will continue to work with the Beaverhead County Weed District in development and distribution of the Southwestern Noxious Weed inserts and submit additional articles to the area newspapers when time allows. Jefferson County also encourages participation in trainings offered by surrounding counties and throughout the state with the Montana Weed Control Association (MWCA).

Jefferson County Weed Board Program Mission

The Mission of the Jefferson County Weed District is to promote good land stewardship and to educate landowners/managers as well as agencies within Jefferson County on the importance of implementing an integrated weed management program and to protect and improve the integrity of the natural resources for future use and enjoyment.

*Jefferson County Weed Board
Jefferson County
Integrated Weed Management Plan*

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Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Producer List (updated yearly)

APPENDIX J

Special Embargo Program

Revised by: _____ *Date* _____
Jill M. Allen, Weed Coordinator

Reviewed by: _____ *Date* _____
Dave Kirsch, Jefferson County Commissioner

Recommended by: _____ *Date* _____
Cory Fitzgerald, Jefferson Co. Weed Board Chairman